ISSUE 156 SEPTEMBER 2022

KNOTTING MATTERS

The Magazine of the International Guild of Knot Tyers

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

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President
Colin Grundy
e-mail: **president@igkt.net**

Hon Sec
David Bodger
e-mail: **secretary@igkt.net**

IGKT Postal Address
IGKT, Oaken Cleave, Cobbaton,
Umberleigh EX37 9SG UK

Membership Secretary
Caroline Sandrey
15 Spey Close, Thornbury,
Bristol BS35 2NR UK
e-mail: **membership@igkt.net**

Website
www.igkt.net
Items intended for the website should be submitted to Colin Byfleet at
cr@byfleet.org

Publications Group
e-mail: **publications@igkt.net**

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KNOTTING MATTERS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

EDITORIAL BOARD
Maurice McPartlan (Editor-in-Chief)
Gordon Teenan
David Pepper

knottingmatters@igkt.net
By post: Knotting Matters,
23 Stoms Path,
London SE6 3QJ, UK

The editors welcome the submission of letters, articles, photographs and sketches for publication. Correspondence may be by e-mail **knottingmatters@igkt.net** but more extensive items, such as articles for publication, as well as any pictures, which should be of good quality, need to be sent as attachments. All submissions must include their author's name and e-mail or postal address.

If events are to be publicised in Knotting Matters, note the months of publication - March, June, September and December. Although the deadline for the next issue is given at the foot of the Contents page, please note that the editors begin putting it together at least three weeks earlier.

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KNOTTING MATTERS

Issue 156 September 2022

2	Editorial	29	What a Wonderful Plant is Rhubarb
3	Letters to the Editor	30	Tom Bowling
8	Eight-Strand Round Braids	31	A Little Job for You
10	Crow Scarers	32	I Am The Wheel
11	Mandeville Memories	35	Arc Bights
17	Zooming in Australia	40	Membership Renewal
18	The Princess and the Dragon	41	Obituary
20	The Wee Vos Knot Workshop	43	Branches
27	Another Tool Tip	45	Supplies
28	Knotting News Clip		

PLEASE NOTE: LETTERS & ARTICLES FOR THE DECEMBER 2022 *KNOTTING MATTERS* MUST BE RECEIVED BY 1st NOVEMBER

FRONT COVER: WINDY CHIEN INSIDE HER HALF DOME 'SOAP BOX' SEE P32

EDITORIAL

Hello to all,
There have been problems with the delivery of *Knotting Matters* for some time as many of you will know, so we ask you to let us know when you had received yours. Out of roughly 800 copies posted only a very sad 14% of recipients responded to the request! In the UK, those who replied received their copies by 24th June. In the EU, delivery varied between 21st June and 11th July. In North America the spread was 27th June to 8th July. Remarkably one Hong Kong member reported receipt on 26th June. Australian mail managed from 13th-19th July and New Zealand 12th-14th July. There isn't really enough data from which to draw conclusions, let alone address possible remedies. So we ask you again, please simply drop an email to treasurer@igkt.net to tell us when this issue arrives.

We draw your attention to the Membership Secretary's message regarding renewal of membership (p40), which includes various ways to settle the modest fees.

For many years, the Guild's library has been housed in a small room in the South West of England, for want of a more prestigious home. In this issue, you can learn some good news. The Guild's book collection will be catalogued and installed permanently at a thoroughly appropriate site (p6). Des Pawson has given his extensive book collection to the same library.

In memory of a very active, prolific and distinguished member, Jan Vos, President 1989-1991, who sadly died far too young (Obituary, December 2019 *KM* 145) the IGKT in his native Netherlands organised an unusual workshop based on a new decorative knot which is named after Jan, and Elise Vos joined them. Read all about it on p20.

We are able to report the sad death of John Steggles with more than the usual number of pictures of his work. He had been forced to drop out of knotting circulation some years back because of his illness. Fortunately, John's wife Margaret had plenty of photographic memories.

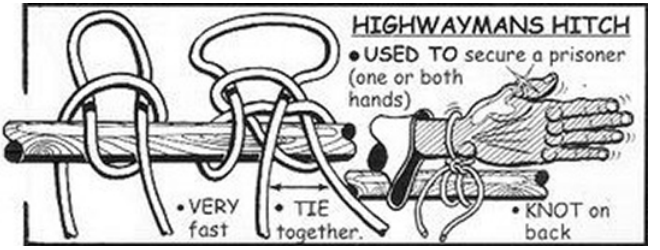
The closing date for contributions to the next magazine is getting earlier each quarter. This is because members have, quite correctly, assumed we meant the date was the last, but when material arrives at the last minute, the magazine is sometimes already complete, and we have to apologise for having to add it to the following issue. We hope by quoting an earlier date we will avoid this.
David, Gordon and Maurice.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hello Maurice,

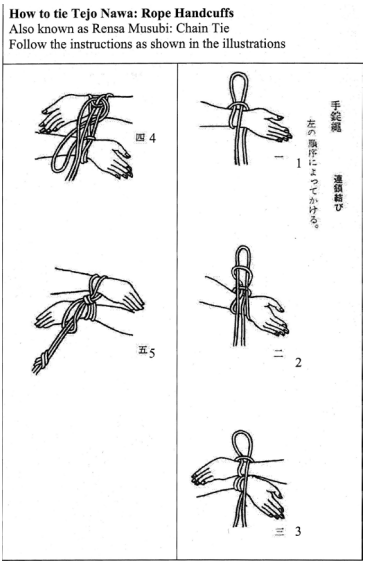
I was aimlessly browsing through some sites that had come up on Pinterest and I found the Highwayman's hitch among some nautical knots. I have used this knot since my schooldays (a very long time ago) but this is the first time I have seen it suggested as a restraint.

By tying to a rail or around one wrist the other wrist is put through the loop and when all is pulled tight the ends are knotted at the back.



This appears to be a different interpretation based on the name of the knot without being aware of the bank-robber story about a quick release for his getaway horse and I wondered if any other members had come across this knot used as a restraint. It is not a method I would recommend for securing a villain - but that is a different story.

Before finishing this letter, I appear to have answered my own question. While looking for something completely different I found the attached in a Japanese book on restraining prisoners. Luckily it is partly translated into English.


How to tie Tejo Nawa: Rope Handcuffs
Also known as Rensa Musubi: Chain Tie
Follow the instructions as shown in the illustrations
四 4
一 1
二 2
五 5
三 3

On looking at the picture you have to read the right hand column first and then the left. This would have been used in conjunction with other bindings but shows that the hitch has been used in times past for controlling miscreants.

Perhaps the person who drew up the chart from which I took the first picture had spent time in the East but missed out on the final securing section. However, I would still be interested to find out if anyone else has knowledge of it used for this purpose in the Western hemisphere.

Richard Hopkins

Dear Maurice,

Re Geoffrey Budworth's letter *KM* 155, p8 (GB's picture: see right).

The three tools illustrated are for making rag rugs, either the type know as a hooked rug (the hooked end gives the game away) the strips of rag being hooked through, or proddy (proddie) type where the strips of rag are pushed through the sacking or other backing.

Beamish Museum has a good selection. Over the years I have collected a good few, which are now at Chatham but have yet to be put online.

Des Pawson

Dear Maurice,

Re Geoffrey Budworth's letter *KM* 155. I was interested to see the photo of 'Cumbrian splicing tools', as I have encountered such tools and know them as a 'proddy' and two 'hookies'.

Before carpets were universally affordable, one thrift craft was the making of rag rugs. There were several main types of these mats - woven, plaited, hooked or prodded - and the sort produced depended on the skills, equipment and materials available.

Worn clothing, scraps left over from curtains and sheets, tattered blankets and even left-over wool from some knitted garment would be washed, sliced into strips and sorted into heaps of similar thickness. If a loom-frame was available, this would be warped with string - and the rag strips would be woven to make mats. If the strips were long but no loom was available, they could be braided into flat sinnets (generally 3-strand, but I have seen 5-strands used on occasion) which would then be sewn into mats – like the rope mats.

Less obviously time-consuming and possibly with more scope for using coloured strips to make pictorial designs, came the hooked mats. A 'hooky' was inserted into the meshes of an old sack that had been split down its seam and a pattern outlined on it. The hooky pulled up a small loop of the cloth strip beneath, and the finished piece would have the other half of the sack stitched to the back to hold everything in place. The skill in making hooky rugs lies in keeping each loop even, and the work is comparatively slow because the hook needs to be disengaged from each loop before making the next.

The proddy rug was made by using the fid-shaped tool on the left of the photo to push a tuft of cloth into the mesh of the sack-top until each space was evenly

covered, then, again, the other half of the sack would be sewn to the back of the mat to hold the tufts in place. The proddy rug was the easiest to mend as the missing tufts could be replaced by using the proddy to push another tuft into the space.

Between the two World Wars, the manufacture of rug canvas and latch-hooks made rug-hooking another option. Then came the rug-canvas with designs ready-printed, and the bundles of rug yarn already cut to the same length – and the need for rag rugs vanished as the fashion for rug-hooking took over. Also, the rags that were cut from artificial and synthetic fibres did not have the same durability in use as the natural fibres.

Then, in the 1990s there was a revival of interest in the hooky rugs. I purchased my proddy at that time, and promised myself I would buy a hooky too when I was ready to make a hooky rug. However the effort of cutting strips of fabric for the proddy mat convinced me that I was unlikely to be making a hooky mat – and I spent the money on a new bathmat instead.

Europa Chang Dawson

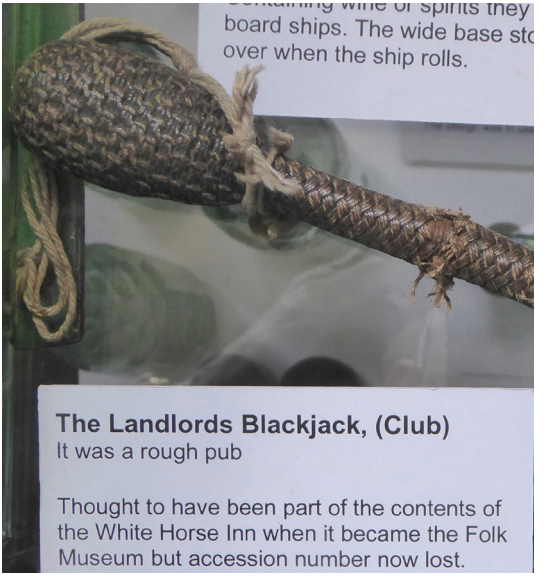
Dear Maurice,

I am sending you photos of a cosh.

It is in the Cambridge Folk Museum which once was a pub dating back to the Civil War, perhaps a bit earlier.

The cosh would have been from Victorian days or even the first part of the 20th century as their photo of the last landlord from before the war suggested that he might have been a violent chap!

Richard Hopkins


board ships. The wide base st
over when the ship rolls.
The Landlords Blackjack, (Club)
It was a rough pub
Thought to have been part of the contents of the White Horse Inn when it became the Folk Museum but accession number now lost.

Dear Maurice,

The IGKT Library. One of the initial aims of the Guild was to make a collection of books related to knotting and ropework. It reached about 480 items and was cared for over many years by Gordon Perry. Since Gordon's death in 2015, the books have languished in the Guild's store in the sturdy boxes he made for them. In the meantime, a suitable permanent home has been sought. Approaches to several possibilities came to nothing until last year (2021). The Trustees were then able to agree with the library of the Brunel Institute (formed by co-operation between the University of Bristol and the SS Great Britain Trust) that the books be housed there.

After further negotiation, Des Pawson also donated his much larger collection (about 1,500 volumes) to the Brunel Institute Library.

Through the generosity of George Hart, the Guild has been able to pay the not insignificant costs of transporting the books and amalgamating them into the Institute's David MacGregor Library.

This task started with the their delivery at the end of June and will continue until they have been catalogued over the next few months.

Once complete, the IGKT books will be in the library's online database and the library staff will be happy to assist with online research queries from IGKT members. The library is also open (10am-6pm every day) with free access.

www.ssgreatbritain.org/collections-and-research/collections

Although the Trustees realise that placing the library on any one site has disadvantages, they feel that this is an excellent solution for the long-term future of the books.

If any member has books which they would like to donate to the library in its new home (and which are not already in the collection) their addition will be very welcome.

Colin Byfleet

Dear Maurice,

This particular gate had been serving no useful purpose for some time, in fact not even as a gate, it's been ajar. But it was suddenly called upon to contain animals against their will and so it required some means of keeping it closed while allowing frequent use.

Take a piece of rope (note the whipped ends) and add a Bowline (bottom of left picture) and a quick Rolling hitch, for ease of tightening: a good job done.

Returning the next day, I found the hitch undone, and the gate retied with lots of Granny knots (apologies to grannies everywhere) until all the slack had been used up. I was amazed, it wasn't even looped over the fixed post, but was wrapped around it halfway down the gate. I thought it would have been obvious how my solution worked, but clearly it had baffled someone. I've seen this sort of thing before, even with the most simple things. Such people move among us, probably looking perfectly normal.

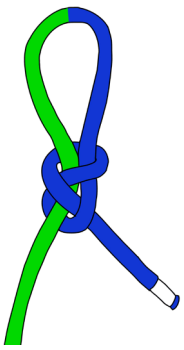
Anyway, there was a happy ending. Somewhere along the line either the light dawned on the miscreant, or someone else pointed it out to them, or they'd been removed from the gene pool. Either way, it saved me standing guard over the gate to catch them at it. For the purpose of education not retribution, naturally.

Your Rural Knot Inspector

Dear Maurice,

I am not sure how to go about this, or indeed if I am being presumptuous. Please accept my apology in advance!

I have come upon this knot on YouTube labelled as a Buntline hitch, which I do not think it is - however, it is a neat knot and easy to tie, but I do not know what its correct identity is.



Can you or any of your esteemed members help?

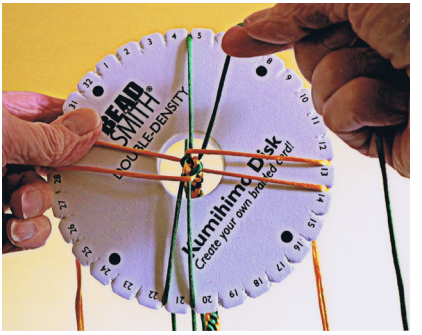
Martin Clifton martin.clifton@icloud.com

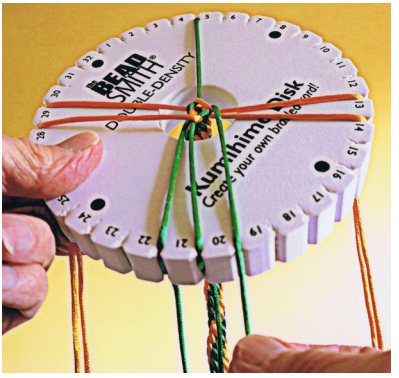
Editors' Note: We agree. Not a Buntline hitch so, any offers?

Eight-Strand Round Braids

by Geoffrey Budworth

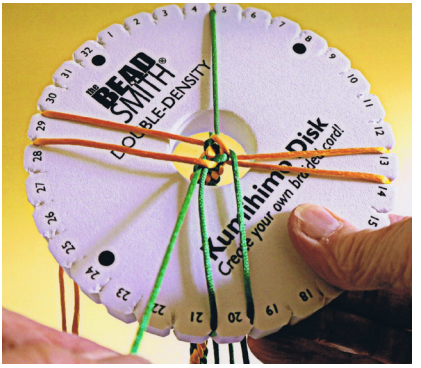
Eight-strand round braids can be employed in rugged outdoor pursuits, ashore and afloat, as well as to create indoor art and craft work. I make them on a hand-held 6in Kumihimo board by Beadsmith. Other makes and sizes are available. Tutorials advise bobbins and a counterweight for lengthy braiding projects but, with strands cut to only 2 or 3m, they aren't necessary. Simply seize or tie eight strands together, each three times the length of the intended braid, and slot them into the board as shown. Ignore the numbers. Start the four pairs anywhere, as long as they are more or less North, South, East and West (right). To keep the braiding sequence simple, I've used only two colours.

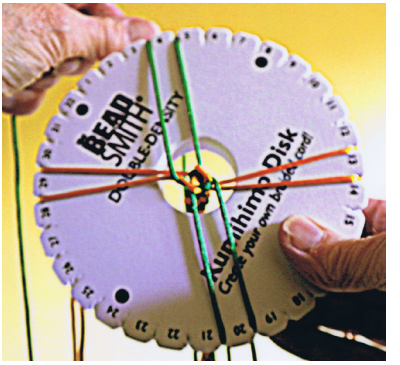




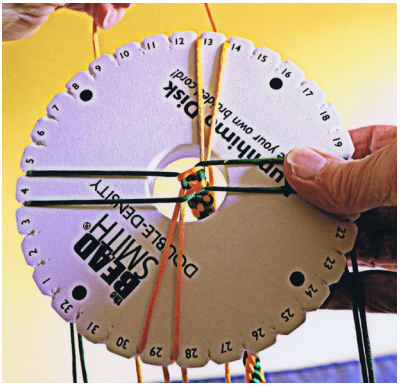
Take the top right hand (RH) green strand and slot it into the bottom RH position alongside the existing two green ones (left).

Then take the bottom LH green strand and slot it into the top LH position (left and right below).





Now rotate the disk a quarter-turn (45°) anticlockwise (right), and repeat with the gold strands.



Pause at frequent intervals to untangle the loose strands below the board. Always stop with a single strand at the top of the disk and three at the bottom. Then you will know which strand of this trio was moved last, and which to move next (namely, bottom left, to top left). Fail to do this, and sooner or later you'll regret it. Also, before putting an unfinished braid down for any reason, ensure that all eight strands are firmly slotted.

Remove completed braids from the disk and seize, heat-seal, or otherwise secure both ends, then give them a gentle stretch to even out the overall tension. With only two colours, patterns are limited (right), even when using fewer strands of one colour, and more of the other, as well as varying which slots hold which colours.

Mix and mingle up to eight different colours, however, and many more distinctive patterns can be created (left).

Then again, by joining and coiling them with the aid of a hot-glue gun, mats and pots can be assembled which generate their own new designs (below).

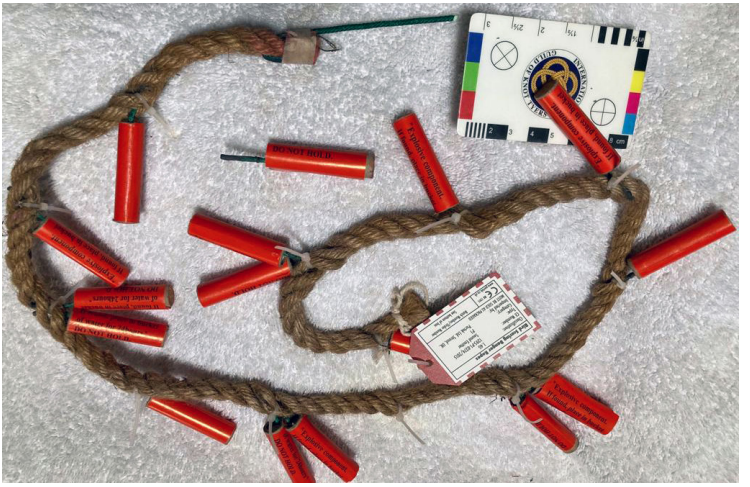
Crow Scarers

by N King

I've been aware of and hearing these for years, then out of the blue someone put one in my hand! Kids' little Guy Fawkes bangers (sorry people outwith the UK) they are not. If one of these goes off in your hand you will know all about it; the quoted safe operating distance is about 25m.

There are two things you should know, possibly a third, about which more anon. Firstly, they are more accurately called Rook scarers. Crows are solitary birds, (scaring them on an individual basis would seriously skew the cost) hence the old country saying, 'Two crows are rooks, a rook on its own is a crow'.

Secondly, both these species of Corvid are smart. I knew a duck farmer who found that to stop them eating all the duck food, instead of blasting cartridges all over the place, all he had to do was to leave his shotgun propped up in the field on occasions, and the cunning birds quickly learned to retreat to the periphery out of range. They'd eventually get hungry and seek more rewarding feeding grounds. Thirdly, (here comes the big finish!) they are constructed of natural rope,



almost nothing else would do, one in the eye for the Hardly-Hemp brigade. Being natural it lends itself to being soaked in a suitably flammable substance, thereby turning it into a fuse. Each little device is simply inserted into the lay of the rope. Note that the intention is to scare the critters not to blow them to bits. The 'safe operating distance' is to save the user's hearing not his general safety.

Mandeville Memories

by Pieter van de Griend

Prologue

Let one event blend into the next and before you know it, you have a story. At least, looking back, I think that was what happened here.

After spending five years on rusty trawlers, with our allotted Atlantic quota of pelagic cod dropping and crustacean stocks pillaged, the prospect of wasting a year 'out on The Pond' did not appeal to me. In 1987, somewhere between the Barents Sea banks and Flemish Cap, I was reading Douglas Hofstadter's *Metamagical Themas*, when an epiphany of a different existence flashed over the horizon. The change of ambition was certainly persuaded by eighteenth-century Englishman Samuel Johnson's words of wisdom. He summed things up nicely by saying that "life at sea is like life in prison, but with the risk of drowning". So, before I "grew too fond of sea life, and no longer fit to live on land" – another Johnson quote, I decided to swap my Atlantic adventure for an academic one in the artificial intelligence domain.

Although the time was ripe for a scholarly adventure, to enter Aarhus university I had to pass a Danish language test in Copenhagen. It was scheduled for mid-January 1988. Not leaving anything to chance, like a snowed-in Faroe Archipelago where I resided, I decided to spend Christmas in The Netherlands. One evening the phone rang. Desmond Mandeville had heard of my plan to visit Harry Asher's Den and inquired whether my itinerary allowed any flexibility to stop over in Blackheath. It did, and so we agreed to meet. Alas, all fond memories of that visit got stowed away behind a remote bulkhead of my mind. But, while reviewing Desmond's trambling book last year, decades-old recollections enticed me to write this article. It also coincided with the possibility of commemorating the 30th anniversary of his death. Plenty of reasons to write about our encounter.

Meeting the Mandevilles

After embarking at Zeebrugge Terminal on Monday January 4th, I enjoyed a smooth morning sail into Dover. When British Rail chugged into Blackheath Station, Desmond was waiting on the platform. A slender elderly gentleman, wearing a tie, but not another knotter clue in sight. At 68 Hervey Road, I met Desmond's wife Norah and their son Nick who happened to be home from overseeing a hydrological project in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.

The scene was immediately set. Here were seasoned travellers, ready to take on any journey across the globe. I was to spend two nights and then set off to meet Harry and Patria Asher and their cat Morgan. Meanwhile, Desmond had something planned for the next few days.

The first afternoon was spent talking about knots while Norah brought us tea and trays of biscuits. Occasionally she would partake in our talk, and I learned that she fully endorsed Desmond's hobby. She did not claim to understand any of the formalistic mumbo-jumbo and compared it to a fascination for crosswords. Norah said, "It was a happy day for him when he first got an interest in knots. Whatever he takes up he'll do with great enthusiasm, and this is certainly true of knotting. He is seldom without a piece of cord in his hands and uses it as Arabs use worry beads!"

As it turned out, Desmond was more religious than me, classifying himself as a creationist. We had an lively conversation about Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), on how natural selection appears to shape the world. Aside from being a chemist by training, Desmond was interested in evolutionary biology but felt that there was an invisible hand driving the design. Therefore, he had purchased a copy of the book to understand Dawkins' arguments and argue otherwise.

By the time evening fell, the first surprise landed. In those days Frank Harris was the Guild's honorary secretary and he lived just around the corner in Springfield Grove, Charlton.

Desmond Mandeville (L) discussing the Tumbling Thief with Frank Harris

Norah had invited him over for dinner from his apartment block named 'Games House'. That got Desmond to poke fun at the athletic connotation the residence suggested. We spent a pleasant evening talking knots and Desmond was quite proud to learn that in Geoffrey Budworth's Dutch edition of *The Knot Book* (1985), his Tumbling Thief was literally translated into 'Tuimelende Dievenknoop'. On the previous page you can see Frank, who was a Turks Head buff, with Desmond, who thought it "all abstruse stuff", happily discussing the merits of that bend. Desmond's earmarked and tattered *ABOK* was frequently consulted that evening.

My first Blackheath dawn brought another surprise. Breakfast tea was delivered in bed every morning at a quarter past seven by my host! Sipping a strong milky cuppa, I scouted around the bedroom playing my favourite game: spot-the-knot. With none in sight, my eye fell on a poster. It was a copy of Max Ehrmann's 1927 poem *Desiderata*, which left a lasting impression on me.

In the morning we went to the Maritime Museum in nearby Greenwich. I was delighted to study the chiselled, but cracked, white marble rope under Nelson's foot (right) as much as the docked Cutty Sark and Gipsy Moth IV.

But Desmond had a different reason for the visit. I noticed an overlap in our knot knowledge management processes, but also discrepancies. While living on a remote Faroe Island I was scavenging the North Atlantic for industrial fishing knots in the wild.

For me, they represent the most neglected and most rewarding of all knot categories and I was happily collecting knots out on the ocean and harbours in which we landed our fish.

Desmond next to Nelson's statue with the chiselled rope

For Desmond, academia was closer at hand and he did his fieldwork in the domesticated knot zoo of the,Maritime Museum. He collected and shared lots of his finds with Harry Asher, and vice versa, but had a particular fascination for the Carrick Bend. No doubt the variety and diversity of structures make for a pastime that is fascinating enough for most knotters. Hence there is no need to venture further and draw general principles and laws from their observations, as Charles Darwin once proposed. Desmond, however, was unlike many others.

An impressive slide show of Nick's project in Nepal filled my last evening. Norah and Desmond had visited him in July 1987 (and later in the early summer of 1990). Despite a lot of cordage being in plain sight, it was hard to identify the actual wild knots in the many Kathmandu images.

After the next morning's breakfast tea and Desiderata study ritual, the plan was to set course for Birmingham. In the early morning sunshine, I took a Mandeville family snapshot (below). When I later reached out to Nick, he consented to this image being used – but wanted it to be known that he is now older than his father was then. He also has more grey hair! Anyway, a truly hospitable visit had come to an end.

Norah, Nick, and Desmond in the early morning sun in the garden

Trambling shop talk

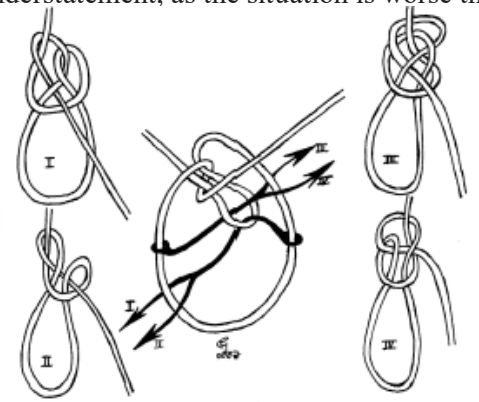
Even though we spoke about knots, from the moment we met until we parted, Desmond had reserved two daily three-hour afternoon Tramble sessions in his calendar. He was an accomplished trambler and that became clear quite soon. I believed I was well-prepared for our meeting, having read anything on trambling from *Knotting Matters*, yet according to my diary notes I found these talks 'difficult'. Several causes conspired to create that impression.

First, Desmond's mind was like that of Harry Asher or Charles Warner. Nothing was given, or trivial, unless consensus was agreed upon upfront. Until then you were allowed to either argue to your heart's content or the strongest, most convincing argument had surfaced.

Second, the first thing any researcher encounters upon venturing into a pristine field is a solid brick wall of ignorance. Answers to questions never come easily when knowledge is in negative supply. As a result, a barrage of thoughts and questions erupts, leading to a steady stream of hypotheses for testing, but effectively adding to the existing confusion. Finally, there is the model hurdle. I was looking at knots in a fundamentally different way from Desmond. Driven by my fishing and sailing background, I generically considered them as evolutionary solutions to rope problems. Desmond had a narrower focus on discovering beautiful relations among the citizens of 'Bend Land'. Nevertheless, although we had been corresponding for over a year before we met, and our conversations rapidly went into the quicksand covering the 'Territory of Ignorance', we got along very well.

Intuitively, trambling is easy to grasp, but exceptionally hard to formalise. Desmond initially worded the notion behind trambling in terms of a metric: "The Reef is close to certain bends when measured in 'tucks' and remote to others" [*KM*10, p5]. That was an understatement, as the situation is worse than one can picture.

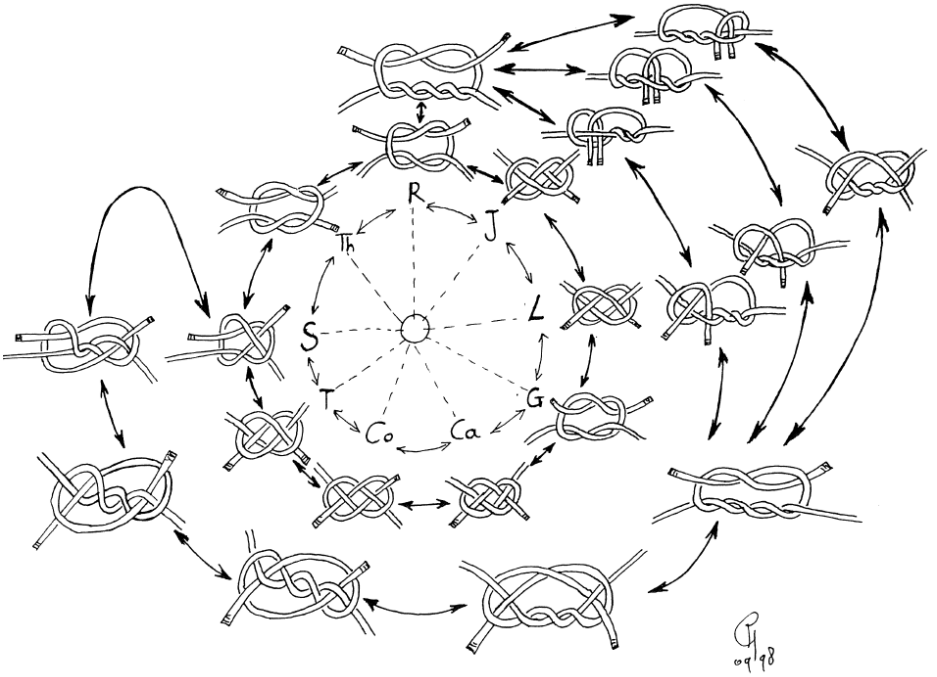
This figure (right) shows how four near-identical tucks may result in four different loop knots. In general, if the tuck is unrestricted, by letting the working end retrace itself on its inward-bound journey and invert crossing parity on its outward-bound journey, the 'tuck' may even mirror the entire knot.



Algorithmically proximate loop knots on the bight

Although technical trouble with trambles abounds, the key issue is that it is not straightforward to define what constitutes a permissible tuck. The challenge lies in wording relevant criteria to help decide which tucks are allowed at which stage of the game. As just shown, tucking is not non-committal. Selected moves are prone to ruin the fun. Trambling is a game of extreme dynamics in which the goalposts will drift as you progress to the next structure exhibiting some utility. Desmond's objective was to find the most obvious tucks resulting in elegant, preferably symmetric bends. In a way, he was letting the simplest survive [*KM*39, pp23-27].

He did not initially think that a path between bends would close itself and bite its tail, bringing him the Basic Tramble. In a sense, completing a Basic Tramble is a convoluted way of tying a Reef knot to and from any other bend on the circular track.



The Basic Ring Road Tramble

Therefore, trambling can be viewed as an extension of tying method which, if exercised methodically, may bring you into contact with many unrecorded structures. But by which method is one to make the invisible visible? How to clarify hidden abstract relationships between bends?

Desmond made a terrific effort to keep things simple and tirelessly explained his findings.

We spoke about various options to reduce complexity. Sometimes abstraction sharpens interrelationships between concepts. Temporarily making things a notch more complicated may help crack a problem. An obvious elaboration was that of repeating moves, which led us onto Ring Road Trambles. As you can repeat an operation infinitely often, structural evolution may skyrocket into outer space (albeit somewhat controlled). Desmond was not fond of making matters more complex to force new insight. Furthermore, the figure left shows that Ring Road Trambles have their shortcomings too, as they do not appear applicable to the entire Basic Tramble. Even as structures are shown to grow more convoluted, they must stay below a certain threshold, again demonstrating survival of the simplest.

As trambles plainly refuse to curtail their complexity, it is a safe bet that they will pose challenges for the foreseeable future.

Epilogue

Whilst writing down this experience, I connected with Nick Mandeville via the internet. He vividly remembered my visit four years before his father died and informed me that Norah passed away in November 2018, having reached the venerable age of 101.

As I said, writing this story about a knot of knotters was not anticipated until it was triggered, but I hope it sketches a useful picture of Desmond Mandeville – a generous and remarkable man of knots.

Zooming in Australia

The 6th of June, 2022, saw the first Zoom meeting for Australian IGKT members. Twelve members logged into the meeting who all introduced themselves and their particular interests in knotting and ropework. There were some fine show-and-tell items presented and some discussion on similar future projects. It was a good start, and we agreed to meeting monthly, and have held two more meetings since, with 16 members at the last count.

The meetings are scheduled for an hour and cover the introduction of new members, show-and-tell of the monthly project and a presentation of a particular item of interest.

Naturally, we already need more time, our last meeting lasted 90 minutes, our best so far. Zoom is an ideal medium for a country with members spread across a vast area and we look forward to the number of members increasing over time.

Darren Samphier 0414 445 753

The Princess and the Dragon
by Ewa Thormählen

Over the years I have had several solo exhibitions at different places in Sweden and sometimes together with other knot tyers. As far as I know exhibitions of fancy work are not very common in Sweden.

The Princess and the Dragon[1] - knots, knots, macramé

my exhibition at The House of Technology and Shipping, Malmö Museum lasted from 17th Dec 2016 to 27th Aug 2017. It was the longest exhibition I had ever had.

The bottles, both big and small, are covered in macramé, the belt is also macramé.

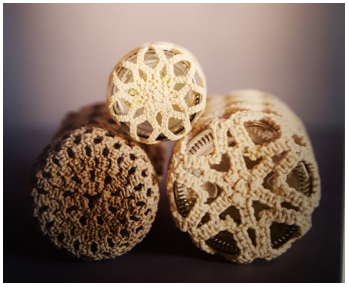
There is a small bottle with an anchor (the anchor is hard to see) and a pot with a sailing boat on top that are covered in needle hitching. The mat is a Prolong knot mat. There is also a needle-case in macramé. You can see Turks Heads on top of the small bottles and on some of the tools.

Like other knot tyers I am very happy to show my work!

1 Story used to explain the tying of a bowline.

One of the showcases

The same case from
the reverse angle



Some of the micro work in another case

The Wee Vos Knot Workshop
by André van der Salm & Marjolein Vrijman

Where to go in the world to find knotting activity? The IGKT Netherlands chapter meeting on the first Saturday of June was a good place to look! The launch of the Wee Vos knot was living proof that knots are a thriving topic and for one day its star shone brightly over Dordrecht. Here we want to share an impression of what we did.

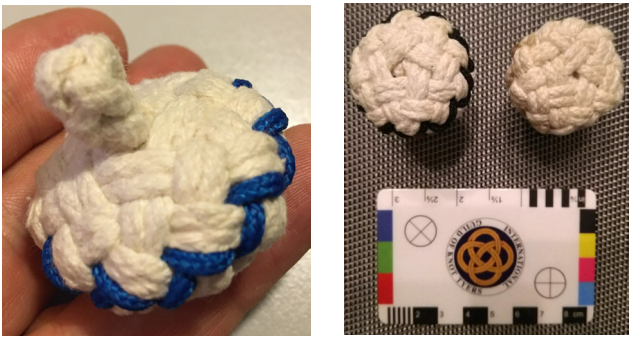


Figure 1 - Wee Vos knots

Background

After Jan Vos's funeral, his long-time friend Henry Rientjes, was amazed to learn the extent of his hobby. Although Pieter van de Griend said that the knotting universe offered enough scope to name an entire knot class in Jan's memory, it turned out that a small knotting project would be more in Jan's spirit. The launch of the Wee Vos knot, as it has since become named, was celebrated in Dordrecht. The city harbours an impressive barge museum that generously hosts the Dutch IGKT chapter. Ties go back to the brothers Jan and Louis Hoefnagel. Every month the iconic motor vessel R.Siegfried, home of the 'Binnenvaart Museum', hosts the Dutch knotting contingent.

Workshop Day

Every so often the Dutch IGKT branch runs a workshop, but this one would be different. We have a member list with email addresses to keep in touch. To get people fired up for knotting, the invitation included images of the Vos Knot and a digital copy of *Het Vuurtoren Knoopje*, the Dutch version of *The Wee Lighthouse Knot*. A few days later we sent out a reminder. On Saturday June 4th, people arrived between 10.00 and 10.30 and stayed till 15.30. You will meet them in this report.

Although attendees were driven by different motives and reasons, their shared passion for knotting, a relationship with the late Jan Vos, or both, brought them to Dordrecht. Marjolein had picked up Elise Vos on her way and brought some Aalsmeer cake. Coffee came courtesy of the museum.

Theo Slijkerman provided a fitting Dutch treat: scheepsknopendrop – liquorice shaped as sailor knots! Frits and Efina Ottens travelled all the way from Leeuwarden in Friesland. Henk van Dorp, Ria Luiten and Willeke van der Ham all arrived around the same time. Early afternoon Mirjam and Henry Rientjes embarked and were even more impressed by seeing knotting come to life from the stories Jan Vos had shared. André was the day's photographer and Marjolein the material quartermaster.

There was an abundance of cordage from the Vos Legacy to work with. Today's goal in the beautiful sunny weather was a try-out of a special knotty project. There was some discussion as to whether to call it a Fox knot or a Vos knot – with 'vos' being the Dutch equivalent of the English noun 'fox'. It was agreed that the name should be a tribute to Dutchman Jan Vos. The Wee Vos knot it became, and a foxy knot it is!

Figure 2 - Knotting activity

The workshop was presented on large sheets of A3 paper and supported by A4 handouts with instructions. Many photographs were taken! Everybody succeeded in making their own specimen.

Some managed it just before midnight that day, while others still have to wriggle in an interweave to show during our next monthly meeting. The day flew by, and everybody was left bitten by a new knot bug!

Figure 3 IGKT-NL meeting attendees. Front row left: Frits Ottens, Marjolein Vrijman, Theo Slijkerman, Willeke van der Ham. Back row left: André van der Salm, Elise Vos, Efina Ottens, Ria Luiten, Pieter van de Griend, Henk van Dorp, Henry Rientjes. Photographer was Mirjam Rientjes

Wee Vos knot Construction

The basic Wee Vos knot requires five strands, or six if you count the interweave, preferably using a contrasting colour. This little project combines the designs of the Wee Lighthouse knot and the Little Lump knot but extends them with the simplest of interweaves. The composite brings together traditional knotting techniques and introduces some novel ones. Figure 4 (next page) shows the Vos knot components.

The start of The Wee Vos knot is almost the same as that of The Wee Lighthouse knot. The exception being that there is a 3-crown mouse instead of a 2-crown mouse. This is to provide more padding and position the fifth strand to make this a 10-strand construct, see Figure 5 (p24).

The next two images (Figures 6a, 6b) show the order in which to make the Southern and the Northern Caps. Provided all goes well, the working ends should meet up with the standing ends coming from under the Rim.

Then make the interweave which is shown in Figure 7[a-d] (p26). Finally tension the caps and interweave in that order.

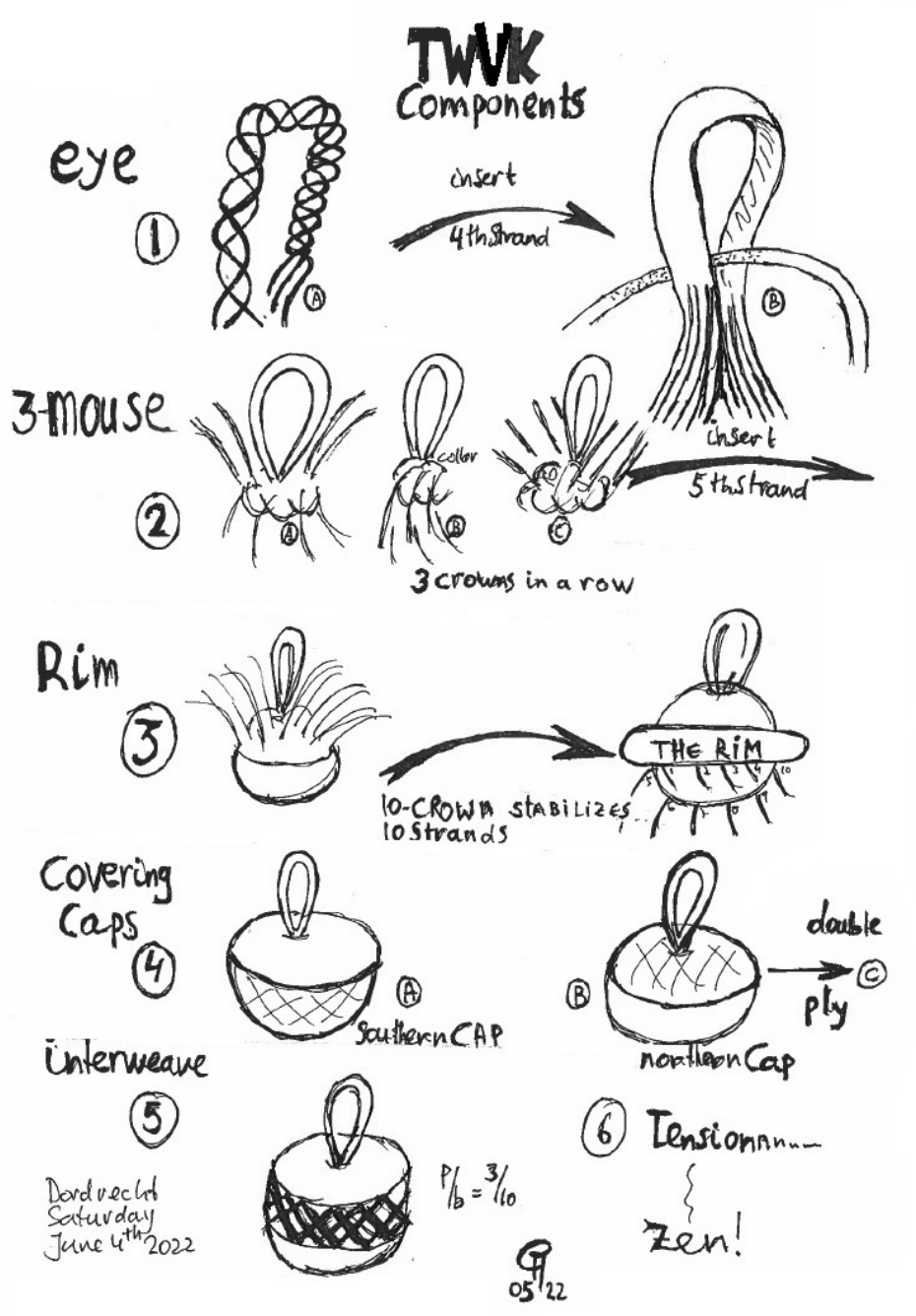


Figure 4 - Wee Vos knot Components

The Morning After

In all, 12 people showed up in Dordrecht. With so much creativity and innovation immediately striking all attendees, we are looking forward to our next session! The Wee Vos knot is just one of many sparkling challenges for attracting people into knotting. We hope to be doing similar workshops in the near future. So, contact us if you want to join us in Holland!

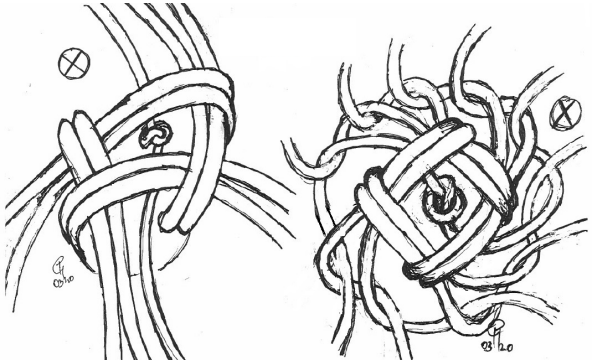


Figure 5 - Inserting the fifth strand and making The Rim

Before The Netherlands fell into summer midnight darkness, Theo Slijkerman from Nijkerk, had already innovated the Wee Vos knot by marrying it with a Matthew Walker. Thereby becoming the first person in Holland's history to produce an evolutionary Wee Vos knot!

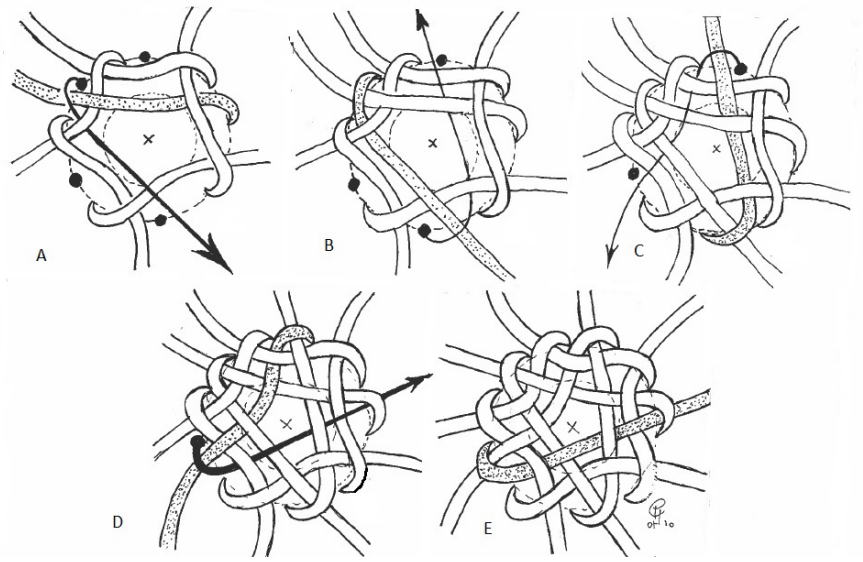


Figure 6a – Make the Southern Cap counter-clockwise

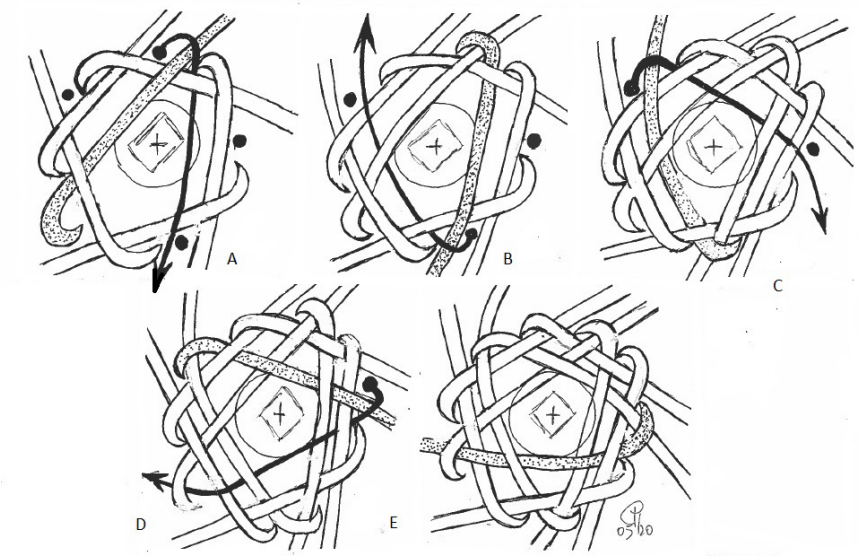
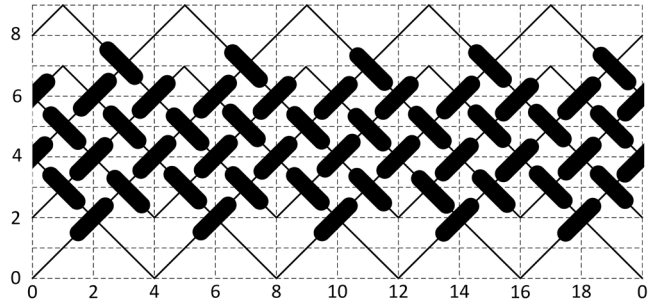


Figure 6b Make the Northern Cap clockwise

Wee Vos knot innovation by Theo Slijkerman

Marjolein's first Wee Vos knots



Northern Cap

Fig. a

Southern Cap

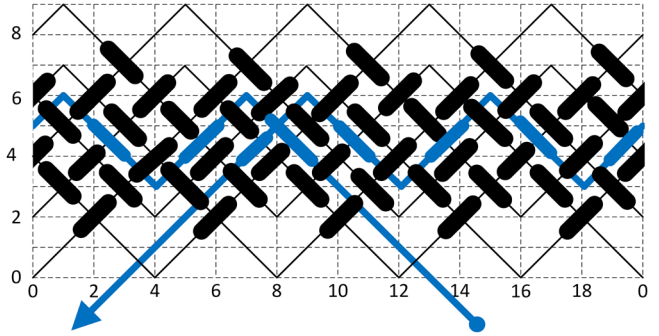


Fig. b

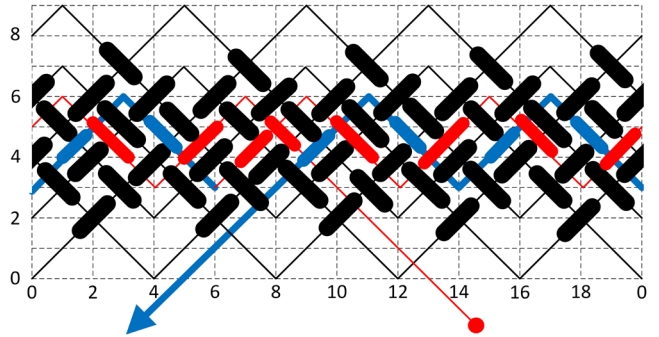


Fig. c

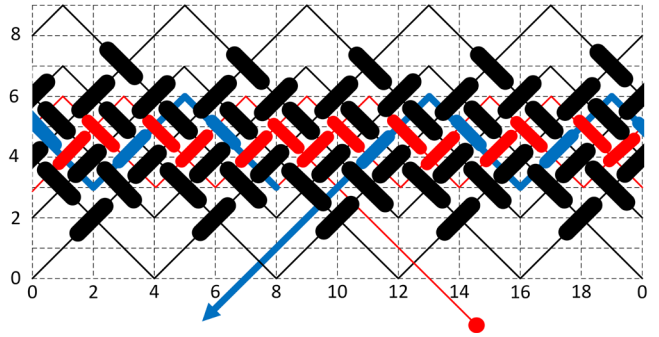


Fig. d

Figure 7 - The Wee Vos knot interweave

Another Tool Tip

from John Shaw (author of *The Directory of Knots*, 2003)

We knot tyers acquire a variety of tools for prodding into shape and then tightening (or later untying) our creations. Anything pointed will do, from a ballpoint pen to a meat skewer. So, when I spotted this lonely orphan amid a heap of otherwise rusting tools in a local junk shop, I adopted it. Outlay: UK £2·00. In fact, it must once have been one of a pair of line pins, strung by bricklayers to ensure straight and level courses of bricks. As such, they are readily obtainable new, online from several suppliers for UK £8·00 or less. Mine is 15cm (6in) long, made from English Sheffield drop-forged steel, heavy duty and rust-resistant. Its bi-convex blade is nicely rounded at the edges and tip, and therefore kind to softer cordage, but it can also be tapped with the head of a marlinspike into tougher stuff.

You may still be in time to catch

IGKT North American Branch

Knotting Symposium and General Meeting

St. Petersburg, Florida, USA

October 13 -16, 2022

Entrance to the symposium, workshops, knotting displays, and General Meeting: $30 for members. A Knot Tyers' Supper & fundraising event, boat tour, Salvador Dali Museum visit, and a picnic gathering will also be available.

Visit our website at https://igktna.org/ to register or see updates to the program and itinerary.

If you are interested in presenting a workshop or lecture and for general questions, contact Therese Melbar at tmelbar@cpp.edu. We are looking forward to getting together again after a two-year postponement.

Knotting News Clip

Geoffrey Budworth, dubbed 'The Father of Forensic Knotting'[1] for his role as an investigator of knots and other cordage items found and preserved at scenes of crime, was recently required, at the age of 85, to give evidence in a landmark murder trial.

On Good Friday in 1987, the lifeless body of a 26-year-old woman was found lying face down in shallow water at the edge of a lake in Buckinghamshire. She had been bound and gagged. Geoffrey was called by Thames Valley Police to examine and report upon her restraints, and later as an expert witness at the inquest into her death. Lacking conclusive evidence, Her Majesty's Coroner issued an open verdict.

The unexplained death became a cold case, subject to periodic reviews, until in 2021, compelling DNA evidence led to a 66-year-old man being charged with murder. So, in May 2022, Geoffrey was recalled, 35 years after giving his original evidence, to confirm his findings at Reading Crown Court.

The defendant, already in custody for another serious offence, refused to appear throughout his trial but was found guilty by a unanimous decision of the jury, of unlawful imprisonment, indecent assault and murder. He was sentenced to serve at least 30 years of a life sentence.

[Geoffrey Budworth began his criminal knotting work in 1978, and wrote a training manual *The Identification of Knots* for the Metropolitan Police forensic science laboratory. His numerous knotting books included the 1985 textbook *Knots & Crime* published by the Police Review Publishing Company. His work has assisted various UK police forces, and other major public institutions.]

1 Chisnall, Robert *The Analysis of Knots & Ligatures*, 2000.

The author was a founder-member and past-president of IGKT.

What a Wonderful Plant is Rhubarb!

by Jane Haselden

Rhubarb grows very well in the Orkney Islands and as you drive around the islands in late spring and summer, you will see it growing in gardens, on the roadside and even on the cliff edge.

In the little courtyard between our house and its collection of outbuildings, is a simply enormous rhubarb patch. Planted and tended by generations of one Orcadian family and forgotten for the last two decades, as the house sat empty and neglected.

We were delighted when we found it and have eaten our fill of it. The wrens and wagtails have hopped amongst its huge spreading leaves, finding plenty of insects to feed to their broods. I have made both yellow and pink dye from the its roots. That would already be enough to earn its place in my garden, but this summer, I have discovered that it is also wonderful for making natural cordage and basketry.

By peeling the rhubarb when it is freshly cut, you can get lovely long lengths of it. If you have any difficulty peeling the outer layer away from the main stem, use a flat-bladed knife to peel down the length of the stem.

You may find that some of the juicy fleshy parts of the stem come away too. It's important to remove these for the best drying results, so carefully scrape down the peelings between a blunt knife and your thumb.

Spread out the peelings and leave them to dry. They will dry in a day if left out in the sunshine, but if the weather is damp or windy, they will only take 2-3 days in a well ventilated area.

I have made simple drying racks, by stretching linen scrim over old wooden frames and these work perfectly for rhubarb peelings.

Once dry, the rhubarb can be made into cordage or used for coil and twined baskets. I found that it was very similar to raffia palm and although it's almost transparent, it is very strong.

Be sure to take some deep breaths of that wonderful rhubarb scent while you are working!

It has been a joy to harvest our rhubarb, eat, make dyes and cord, and weave this summer. Now, the patch stands empty, apart from the gigantic, gnarled roots - until next year.

It will be worth the wait!

Jane Haselden www.fiveinthenest.com

Tom Bowling

Reading a book about Women Warriors, Richard Hopkins' eye fell on a familiar name, Tom Bowling, a boatswain's mate who had been found to be a woman. Our further research in the *Naval Chronicle* vol 17, 1807, p309 has revealed the following: "Female Tom Bowling at the Public Office, Queen Square. An old woman generally known by the name of Tom Bowling was lately brought before the Magistrate for sleeping all night in the street, and was committed as a rogue and vagabond and passed to her parish. She served as Boatswain's Mate on board a man of war for upwards of 20 years, and has a pension from Chatham Chest. When waked at midnight by the watchman in the street, covered with snow, she cried "Where the devil would you have me sleep." She has generally slept in this way, and dresses like a man, and is so hardy at a very advanced age that she never catches cold." *(Editors' Note: Thanks to Terry Barnes for help in accessing this journal.)*

A Little Job for You!
by Gordon Teenan

"Got a little job for you" those dread words: your mouth goes dry and your stomach tightens!

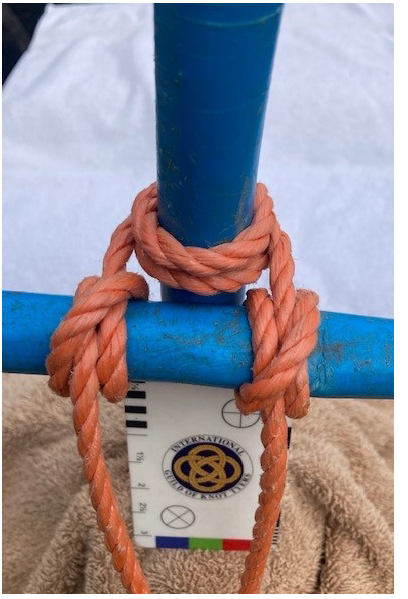
This time my skills were in demand by a ski-boat owner. "I need to clip a carabiner to a piece of rope on the tow pole."

The tow pole was a two metre stainless steel post with a welded cross piece, of similar dimensions to the representation in these photos. It was fitted just inboard in the stern of the boat for the purpose of towing water skiers, or possibly huge doughnuts or even giant rubber bananas!

Having spent some time considering the problem, there were some issues to think about: it mustn't come off, it mustn't break, and it mustn't move around or strangle anybody, which to some extent goes without saying!

One consideration: if you are doing it for yourself, you might think, "I'll just nip up this; might need to tighten that a bit". But as a favour for someone else, you won't be around to notice the need for such small adjustments, and the recipient of your goodwill won't even begin to even think about it. So it has to idiot-proof. Well, you've probably heard that before, but it's true.

I used a piece of field-hardened nylon which I just happened to have around, and came up with the idea of splicing a strop, tying a Clove Hitch in the bight, slipping it over the vertical, making sure the working ends point the right way, followed by two more in the bight, slipping each of them over the horizontal pieces, working the whole thing up tight. Getting the strop's short splice central in the bight with a couple of seizings either side keeps everything ship-shape afterwards. The thinking behind the Clove Hitches was for the construction to be, to a certain extent, self-tightening.



Pearls before swine you might say, just don't say it out loud even if it was a freebie.

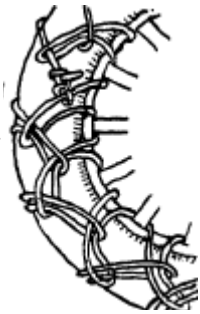
For goodness' sake, it was just a piece of rope……wasn't it?

I am The Wheel
by Windy Chien

In the early spring of 2022, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art asked my studio to participate in their revival of the MOMA Artists' Soapbox Derby, which was last held in the 1970s. Had I ever entertained the desire to make a moving vehicle out of knots? No! And yet, when I learned that one of my favorite artists, Ruth Asawa, had participated in that last race, I thought, if Ruth can do it, I can do it. And off we went.

I'm quite interested in the intersection of mathematics and art, so I decided to make a half dome, a classic shape. My fabricators *One Hat One Hand,* led by Marcus Guillard, delivered a wonderful half dome/sphere of aluminum circles, each 6in (15cm) diameter. It took me and my small team two weeks to encase the frame in knots.

Minimalism describes my work. By which I mean I typically make use of only one knot type at a time, one colour at a time, and so forth. I keep all the elements secondary to the line so that they recede and thus the journey of the line is what's most visible to the viewer. As you know, in each knot, the line's journey is unique and that simplicity is what makes them so resonantly powerful.



For our soap box derby car, I chose *ABOK* #2027 (right), not only because it's beautiful and I was already very familiar with it (it is the knot I use to make my Diamond Ring series of works) but also because Ashley says it had been used as a rudimentary ice- or mud-chain around the wheels and skis of 'old timey' vehicles. How perfect for our car. This is why we named the car 'I Am The Wheel'.

I was also thinking about one of the heydays of fibre art and soft sculpture in the late 1960s when artists, mostly women, were making immersive environments composed of textiles and other fibre elements. The fact that the dome would feel like a safe, womb-like, enveloping space, felt right.

We covered every single ring with knots. We used almost 5000ft (1500m) of 5/16in (8mm) cotton solid braid. *ABOK* #2027 is an easy knot to make, due to its simple bight-within-bight, crochet-ish structure and the fact that one does not have to pull the working end through each knot.

We kept the lengths as long as possible, trying to use each 1000ft (300m) spool without having to cut it.

The only difficulty presented itself in the intersections of the rings, where we often had to cross under existing loops to get to the next circle. In these cases, we used bent-nose pliers to work the loops under the existing tightly-knotted sections.

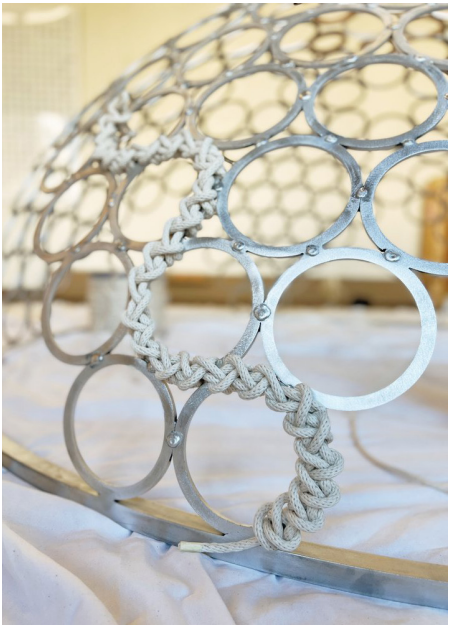
On race day, April 10th 2022, the 50 participating cars were displayed in sunny MacLaren Park for a few hours before the derby. Many thousands of Bay Area people attended, young and old; and after two years of pandemic isolation, it felt glorious to be outdoors amongst those great Bay Area people. Everyone was happy and celebratory. Our car was a huge hit amongst the children, who showed no hesitation at crawling in and pretending to drive it.

When it came time for our trip, three of us piled into the car and, accompanied by the dulcet strains of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid', we sailed down the hill. Due to the car's wide base, we made it down without mishap. Many other cars flipped or crashed, but we emerged safe . . . and elated!

A fantastic time was had by all, and I am so glad to have embraced the challenge of applying my art to the concept of a derby race car.

I thought that was the end of it, but the idea may actually have another life to it: my partner fabricators who cut and welded the rings and created the car chassis have now created a museum in virtual reality called *Archais Virtualis*. Rendered 30ft high, **I Am The Wheel** lives there not only as a monumental sculpture in the courtyard of a stunning VR space, but as a prototype for what the dome will look like when, one day, we make it in the real world at that scale.

Many more photos and videos of the project may be found at windychien.com/iamthewheel.



SFMOMA'S SOAPBOX DERBY
at McLaren Park

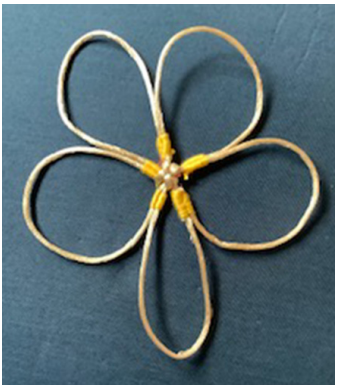
Arc Bights
by Europa Chang Dawson

Although numerous patterns may be built up from a handful of basic knots, many of the more interesting variations come from the treatment of arc bights. Here are a couple of suggestions for treating big bights.

If you tie a Calyx knot of five sections, making the arc-bights very long, you will have a 'flower' of four lobes and two ends projecting from the fifth section. This can be made into a five-petalled flower by bringing the two ends together, or by turning the Calyx knot into a Lotus-seedpod so that the ends project from the centre back of the knot.

With either choice, the large arcs make the knot less stable than usual, and the centre needs to be stitched or have some figure-of-eight wraps on the sections to hold the shape. These are made just as a whipping is started and finished, but with the whipping cord making figures-of-eight between the two sections to hold them apart – I tend to lap the start and finish ends of the knotting cord and wrap them together as one.

Also, to keep my long arcs even, I measure out and stitch the ends of the arcs to the length required. Usually, I would use a matching colour, to obviate the need to unpick the stitches, but the illustration has been stitched in a contrast for the camera.

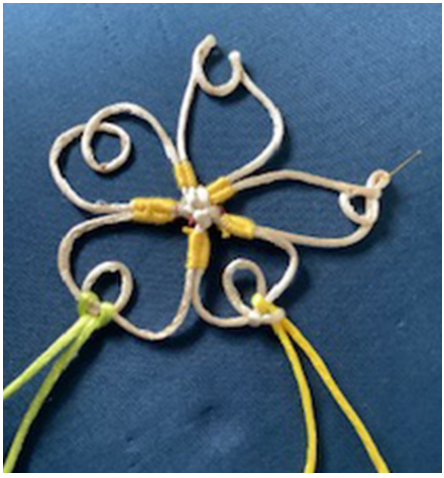


The second round of the pattern has been tied in a contrasting colour to make the picture easy to follow – but it looks much more impressive when the completed piece is in a single colour. You can see the arc bight has been bent back into three sections and the cusps have been interwoven with the second cord to make a trivial version of a triaxial PC. The completed knot gives a stylized cherry-blossom, and every single junction will need stitching.

A minimally less time-consuming variation, but just as unstable, is to make a loop in the bight and lock it with a Lark's head with the second cord.

[NB in the last two photos the ends have been pinned and not stitched as the knots were only tied for the camera.]

The two ways of tying have been placed side-by-side in the photo for comparison.



Of course the looped bights can be made on the second round – the PC shows one variation with two tiny loops on the second cord and one in each corner-bight. The corners probably ought to be stitched, but the more stable structure of the central PC makes the knotting easier. [The red and white 'beads' of the piece are made by tying a 2-strand Matthew Walker in one colour and taking the other pair through the middle]

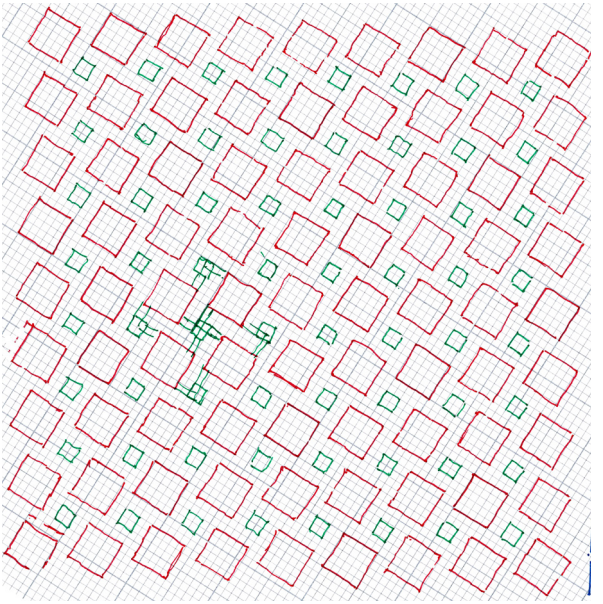
Incidentally, if you are using the Calyx knot with loopy bights as embellishment rather than for good wishes, you do not need to tackle the problem of hiding the ends of the cord – so an extra section in the central crown may be used.

When pulled tight, the knot is quite stable – the necklace has been in use for some years and the Calyx knots were not stitched, but the weight of the pendant may have helped to hold everything together.

Another example (front and back) of adding arc bights.

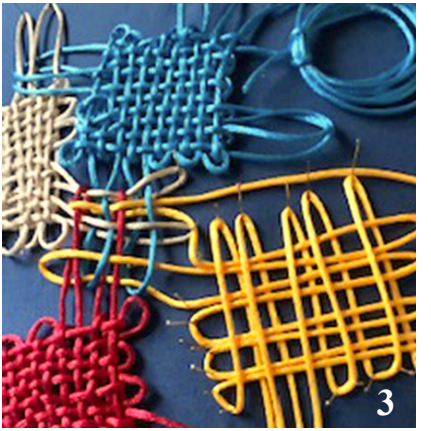
The horizontal line of the row of PCs must lie parallel to either the vertical or the horizontal of the underlying structure.

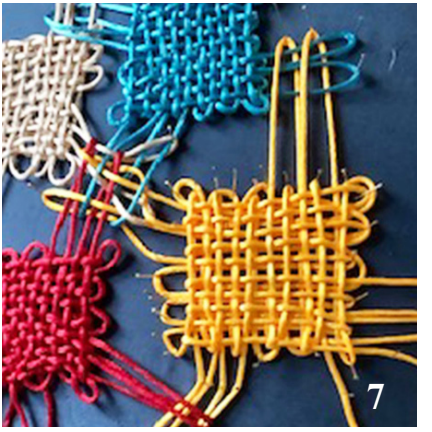
Returning to the Knot of Longevity, there is one variation that is seen more often in carved or moulded panels than in its original, knotted form. Anyone tying this one must be certain of how to tie the basic 5x5 PC already. This variation consists of a lattice made up of 9x9 PCs (81 5x5 PCs in all) where every group of four PCs is linked as in the images on the following pages.



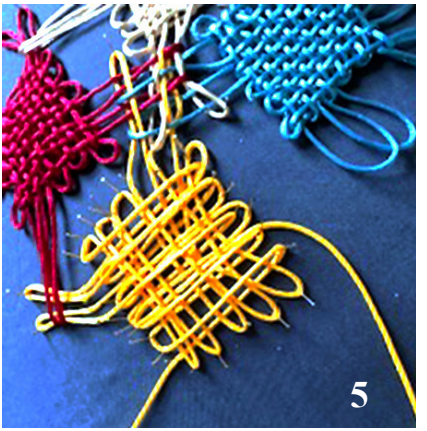
It has been shown with each unit in a different colour for ease of following – colours were chosen for the camera, not for any significance. Here, some of the arc bights have been pulled out to make finger-bights for the linking of each unit, so that it is only the fourth unit of each quartet where the interwoven arc-bights need care and attention.

Also, begin the tightening with the central Knot of Longevity and work outwards. It is better to take out a little slack each time rather than pulling something too tight and needing to start again. The auspicious colours for a piece like this would be red or gold. I shall not be completing the great square started in the photo sequence as the colours are not what I would have chosen – nor do I have anyone for whom to tie such a piece. However, it was important to record the method.





Detail (1-9) of the joining of any four Pan Changs within the 9x9 lattice



If you keep the sequence throughout, there are no problems with the interweaving. The trick, though, is to avoid tightening any section until all the units are in place, and yes, it looks a real cat's cradle while you are tying it! Given the time required to tie the full 9x9 Knots of Longevity, it would have been tied only for very special people such as the first great-grandson, or perhaps the Emperor. Remember, when completing the great square, that the arc-bights at the edges do not need to be extended into fingers.

NB With respect to the Great Square, it probably wouldn't have been used in full on any garment. Maybe not even carved in full on any one panel for reasons of hubris.

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OBITUARY

John Steggles

John Steggles, who joined the Guild at its inception, died on 1st July 2022 having suffered from Lewy body dementia for 10 years, the condition which sadly meant he had to give up his beloved knotting and his IGKT membership.

John learned his knotting, originally, aged 11 in the Sea Scouts, and was inspired when a sailor showed them how to make a macramé belt. Thereafter he was involved in the art and craft of knots and ropework for most of his life. His work as a BT engineer also involved knotting and lacing of cables at telephone exchanges.

Beach-combing and knotting were among John's favourite activities, and he and his wife Margaret had a craft stall selling his work which featured items fashioned from rope and driftwood found on the beach, as well as smaller items using cord and macramé made in his studio.

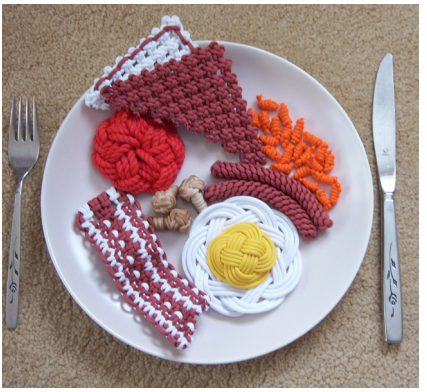
Prehistoric dragonfly

John seems to have regarded his dragonfly as some sort of signature because it appears in a great many of his pieces.

Husband and wife supported many local events with their stall, including frequent appearances for the Freshwater Independent Lifeboat, come rain or shine.

On at least one occasion during a coastal storm John was reduced to hanging desperately on to their gazebo to stop it blowing away, getting soaked to the skin for his pains.

People, especially children, loved his version of a Full English Breakfast.



Margaret helped make keyrings for John to distribute when he gave some of his talks to local WI groups.

She had always been into sewing, knitting and crochet, and now she is intending to carry on with the duo's good work by using up some of the leftover cord to make netting to hold a couple of glass floats.

BRANCHES

Australia

Contact: Robert Underhill
rvumoose@icloud.com

Tel:+61 488 777 785
34 Dawson Place, Donnybrook,
WA 6239 Australia

Belgium

Contact: Ronny Wouters
rcwouters@scarlet.be
Tel: +32(0)3 658 7937
Venue: Akkerlaan 24, 2900 Schoten,
België

Canada

Southern Ontario Knot Tyers
http://knotcanada.webs.com/
Contact: John Staley
southern.ontario.knotyers@gmail.com
Tel: +1(1) 905 389 2509
Venue: Hamilton, Ontario

France

www.igkt.fr
Contact: Jean-Pierre Durand
durand0547@orange.fr
Tel: +33(0)6 64 00 66 91

Germany

http://www.knotengilde.de/
Contact: Yuval Dvoran
info@knotengilde.de

Internationale Gilde der
Knotenmacher Deutsche Sektion e.V.
c/o Matthias Böving
Kappenstrasse 22
45473 Mülheim/Ruhr

Netherlands

Contact: André van der Salm
andrevdsalm@gmail.com
Tel: +31 (0) 625 067 174
Venue: Binnenvaart Museum,
Maasstraat 19, 3313 CR Dordrecht.

New Zealand

All enquries about this branch: contact the Guild's Web Administrator.

United Kingdom

Dorset - UK

Contact: Peter Goldstone
goldstonepg@aol.com
Tel: +44 (0)1725 516 258
Venue: The Ship Inn, Custom House
Quay, Weymouth DT4 8BE

East Anglian - UK

Contact: Stuart Weston
pugwash1941@gmail.com
Tel: +44 (0)1449 674 327 or
+44 (0)7801 239 731
Venue: Windmill Room, Abbots Hall
Primary School, Danescourt Ave,
Stowmarket, Suffolk

Midlands - UK

Contact: Bruce Turley
bruce@btknots.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1214 534 124
Venue: The Old Swan Inn,
(Ma Pardoes), 89 Halesowen Road,
Netherton, Dudley, DY2 9PY

North West England - UK

Contact: Ian Rogers
iansrogers@aol.com
Tel: +44 (0)1606 590 729
Venue: TBA
Please contact Ian Rogers

Solent - UK

http://igkt-solent.co.uk
Contact: Chris Jenkins
igktchris@btinternet.com
Tel: +44 (0)2392 601 779
Venue: Fareham Sailing and Motor Boat Club, Lower Quay, Fareham, Hampshire PO16 0RA

Surrey - UK

www.surreyknots.org.uk
Contact: Tony Shellard
secretary@surreyknots.org.uk
Tel: +44(0)1483 502 156
Venue: Guildford District Scout Centre, Nightingale Road, Guildford, GU1 1ER

West Country Knotters - UK

Contact: Richard Hopkins
richardhopkins907@gmail.com
Tel: +44 (0)1179 867 146
Venue: Woodhouse Park Activity Centre, Fernhill, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4LX

Yorkshire - UK

Contact: David Pearson
wayzegoose_uk@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)113 257 2689
Venue: Pudsey Scout Headquarters, The Lanes, Pudsey, LS28 7AS

United States of America

Alaskan Branch - USA

Contact: Charles Rigden
charles@rigdencpa.com
Tel: +(1) 1 928 231 2775
Venue: Anchorage Senior Center, 1300 East 19th Avenue, AK 99501

North American Branch - Knot in the Middle - USA

www.igktnab.org
Contact: John Staley
southern.ontario.knotyers@gmail.com
Tel: +(1) 1 905 389 2509

Pacific Americas - USA

www.igktpab.org/
Contact: Peter Glick
PMGlick@gmail.com
Tel: +(1) 1 310 871 8611
Venue: Los Angeles Maritime Institute 73 Berth Suite 2, San Pedro, CA 90731

All branch details as on IGKT website on 17/8/2022

Back cover: Marjolein Vrijman and others at the Vos knot workshop p20

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